

COVER, COAT and COLOR

How business-savvy FMs brush up their brands with paint

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hen it comes time to update your facility's appearance, there's more to it than slapping a coat of paint on a wall. Painting plays a key role in the visual aspect of your company's branding in every store, and for lasting results you have to do your homework.

Before you decide it's time to refresh your paint scheme, examine the many important steps and reasons for why an update may be necessary and the key technical steps for a proper upgrade.

The Painted Image

"Image is everything. A retailer has the opportunity to impress or not impress from the time a customer enters the parking lot, from when they walk in the store," said Curt Dowling, Executive Vice President, Benise-Dowling National Painting, headquartered in Atlanta. "The feel of the store is so important to the buying decision and to a person becoming a longtime customer. It tars the image of a retailer if it's not kept up."

Retailers need to establish who and where they are in the marketplace to have their store to back up what their selling. "It's the experience you have when you buy from a retailer. Expectations have grown over the years. Forty-five percent of all retail purchase decisions are made *after* the customer enters the store," said Dowling.



1. Exterior coating samples after exposure in accelerated weathering cabinet. Samples on left are the original coating samples from four different manufacturers. Samples in the middle and right are the same material after weathering. 2. Exterior coating with moisture sensitive resin causing it to wrinkle and disbond from the block surface. 3. Moisture meter used on smooth-face block to determine moisture content nondestructively.

Steve Hearon, of BrandPoint Services, agrees that painting produces a high-value return on investment, and it's especially important to focus a lot of attention on high-traffic areas in the store.

"In a typical year we apply paint at more than 3,000 locations, for more than 100 retail and restaurant brands. The key for lasting impact is maintenance of high-traffic areas; entry ways, bathrooms, and dressing rooms tend to get the most maintenance," Hearon said. "If you have a small budget, it's even more important to focus on the high-traffic areas."

The ROI of Paint Jobs

According to Dowling's research, provided by Willard Bishop Consulting, LLC, a three percent sales lift can be expected after an interior refresh and will provide ROI within 12 months or less. As for exterior enhancements, ROI can be between three and 20 percent, because as Dowling says, it's where the shopping experience begins. A full remodel will provide a guaranteed increase in revenue of between seven and 20 percent for a sustained period of time, he said.

As for how often to upgrade/recoat a paint job, a Benise-Dowling National Painting client, Publix Grocery Stores, with more than 1,100 stores in the Southeast, is on a five-year plan to recoat the inside and outside of each of its stores. "They may even on a quarterly basis do a pressure wash of the front apron to remove gum and dirt. They also have us do the dumpster area to deodorize and pressure wash it as well. It's beyond color, but also cleanliness."

Dowling says five to seven years is about the standard in the marketplace for doing a full paint upgrade of a retail facility. But even so, one of their customers is on a 30-month cycle for redoing high-traffic areas such as the fitting rooms and cash wrap sections to split the five-year lifecycle for such busy sections of their stores.

The key is being proactive toward paint upkeep rather than reactive. "If you're reacting, your customers have already been exposed to a problem. If you're proactive, you'll be more successful with your clients," Dowling said.

Hearon agrees. "A regular painting maintenance schedule for interiors and exteriors is key to always looking your best. It helps you to stay current in a competitive market and helps to further solidify your brand."



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- 4. Water-filled blister in exterior coating.
- 5. Chalking of exterior coating, chalk resistance important in preserving the brand image.

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